

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE

SUITE 2320 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6301  
(202) 225-6371  
TTY: (202) 226-4410  
<http://www.house.gov/science/welcome.htm>

May 20, 2003

The Honorable Tom Ridge  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
3801 Nebraska Ave, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Ridge:

As Chairman and Ranking Member of the House Science Committee, we oversee the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and its National Weather Service. We were recently briefed on the NOAA Weather Radio system and its capability to get warnings to the public for all hazards, including terrorist attacks. We think NOAA's System should be expanded to deal with homeland security.

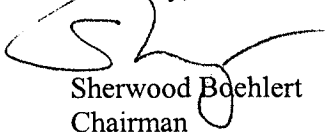
Unfortunately, not everyone knows about NOAA Weather Radio (NWR). Your website is educating the American public about ways to protect themselves in all situations. We hope you will consider adding NWR receivers as an emergency preparedness kit item (which are inexpensive and available at local electronic stores) and consider promoting the system on your website through links to appropriate sites, such as [www.nws.noaa.gov/nwr](http://www.nws.noaa.gov/nwr).

NOAA Weather Radio, a nationwide radio network run by NOAA's National Weather Service, helps save lives and property from hazardous weather and keeps citizens informed about weather threats. Operated directly from government facilities, NWR transmits into the homes of the American public through commercially available receivers and can alert even a sleeping public to impending threats. The transmissions cover 95 percent of the population and about 13 percent of Americans currently own these receivers. NOAA Weather Radio is also linked to the Emergency Alert System, where alerts of impending hazards are rebroadcast over commercial radio and television on a voluntary basis.

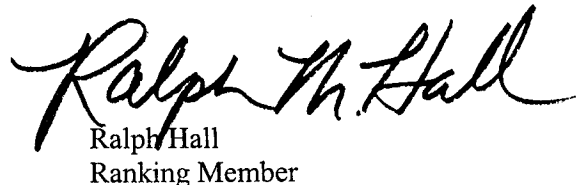
The Committee on Science recognizes that science and technology are the keystones of national security and improving technology is critical. While local emergency managers can use NOAA Weather Radio to broadcast non-weather emergency messages for hazards such as chemical spills and civil emergencies, the process requires manual intervention and can be time consuming. The President's FY2004 budget includes a request to upgrade the current NWR system to provide local emergency management officials an authenticated, secure, electronic method to send non-weather emergency messages on NWR. The increased capability will greatly improve our Nation's ability to respond to any emergency, including a terrorist attack. We fully support this request and have urged our colleagues to do the same.

We appreciate your efforts to confront threats now facing our nation and for helping keep our citizens safe and informed. We think NWR would greatly help in that cause.

Sincerely,



Sherwood Boehlert  
Chairman



Ralph Hall  
Ranking Member